The Girl From the Effete East

By ARTHUR DENSMORE

BARRINGTON was completing his first year of practice when Theodore Tuppenheim arrived in Knuckleville. Mr. Tuppenheim was selling stock in the Charitable Gold Mining company at 5 cents per share, price to advance to 10 cents at the end of thirty days. Incidentally he found time to foster in Barrington's bosom the spirit of discontent which ten months' fruitless waiting for clients had engendered. If he were a clever, clean cut young man like Barrington, did Barrington know what he'd do? Move west. He wouldn't fritter away his time in a mossbacked New England hamlet where people looked down on a fellow just because they'd known him all his life and could remember when he was a little shaver and went with patches on his trousers. No, sir. He'd just gather together his earthly possessions and take the first train for Gilt Gulch, Nev. There was the coming town; there lay the opportunity for an able young man to rise. No reason in the world why he should not be in the United States senate within five years. That would be coming some? Well, everybody and everything came some in that country. Why, sir, where the thriving city of Gilt Gulch now stood there had been less than two years since naught but sagebrush and alkali. And now look at it—just look at it! Six thousand inhabitants and more coming by every train! Simply couldn't get houses up fast enough for 'em. Had to camp out in tents. And every blamed one of 'em making money. Why, sir, you couldn't find a bootblack in Gilt Gulch who was worth less than fifty thousand!

This vision of wealth and political prominence was quite too much for Barrington. He adjusted his affairs in Knuckleville, which was no very difficult matter, took tearful leave of numerous relatives and of a certain pretty damsel, who was not yet a relative, but had rashly promised to become one whenever Barrington's income should suffice for the support of two persons, and hied himself to Gilt Gulch, promising to send souvenir postcards from every municipality he passed through on the way.

Now, underneath the lurid exaggeration with which Mr. Theodore Tuppenheim had clothed his narrative of the rise of Gilt Gulch there lay a respectable substratum of truth, and the combination of Barrington's ingenious appearance with certain letters of introduction to persons financially prominent in Gilt Gulch, which Mr. Tuppenheim procured for him, resulted in his speedily establishing a thriving practice. For the most part it was work in connection with the location of mining claims, and, besides numerous fee in cash, Barrington acquired several claims of his own, which he [illegible] of profitably.

[illegible] at the end of a year Barrington had waxed so prosperous as to [illegible] and marrying. [illegible] Weekly Times and [illegible] that it understood that young Mr. Barrington, for whom its readers would remember, the Times had predicted a brilliant career when he hung out his shingle in Knuckleville, was now one of the leading men in the west, and the other village maidens were openly jealous of Susie Cutler, whose good fortune it was to be to marry a millionaire.

But Susie herself had no illusions. she even refused to permit Barrington to come east for the marriage. Her childhood lessons of thrift and economy had taken deep root in her mind, and she would not, she said, have the price of a round trip railroad ticket thrown away. If Barrington felt that he must spend the money, let him buy a cabinet organ or a secondhand piano for the front parlor. They would be married in their own house at Gilt Gulch and after that take a little wedding trip to Colorado Springs or maybe Denver. Perhaps, being a prudent damsel, Susie desired to have a glance at Gilt Gulch before she committed herself irrevocably. At any rate, matters had been thus arranged, and the date set for the wedding being but two days away and Susie due to arrive that afternoon, Barrington was in the state of ecstasy appropriate to such circumstances. It was in this moment of supreme happiness that misfortune befell him.

The work Barrington had been doing requires to be performed with great accuracy; otherwise it is not only valueless, but may be the occasion of great loss to the client. Now, it is possible that Barrington possessed genius. People who have that, you know, are apt to be careless as to details. Perhaps it was merely that, being deeply in love, he could not concentrate his mind upon his work. However that may be, Hartford, the attorney whose office was next to Barrington's, had discovered in the course of an investigation of the records that Barrington had filed documents containing serious errors. He spoke to Barrington about it in a perfectly friendly way. Barrington received his kindly admonitions with a contempt which he was at no pains to disguise. Why should he pay heed to the remarks of a man who wore baggy trousers and long hair and played faro, to say nothing of becoming intoxicated now and then? He knew well enough what inspired these critical observations. Hartford was jealous of the prosperity which Barrington had so rapidly achieved. Let him step cavilling, said the various Barrington to himself, and soon succeed in leading a sober life, as he did.

Feeling that he had been insulted, Barrington thereafter confined his communications with Hartford to a curt "How are you?" accompanied by a barely perceptible nod when they chanced to meet. It was with a good deal of surprise, therefore, that Hartford, glancing up from his rather dilapidated desk as he heard the door open, perceived Barrington entering his office. One had not to look at Barrington twice to be convinced that he was badly frightened. His eyes, which ordinarily regarded those about him with an air of easy toleration, were wide with terror, and his well chiseled features, customarily wearing an air of placid conceit, were now white and drawn. His manner toward Hartford was no longer supercilious. All his carefully constructed attitude of dignity had vanished.

"You've been in this part of the country longer than I have, Hartford," said he. "I want your advice as a—a friend, you know."

Hartford nodded and withdrew his pipe from his lips.

"Sure," said he succinctly. "What's the row?"

"Why, you see," said Barrington, "it seems that in filing the papers for Jim Busby on that last mining claim of his I made a slight error. I have been doing a large business, you know, Hartford—a very large business—and it was inevitable that I should make a mistake occasionally. It seems that some unscrupulous persons have taken advantage of this purely technical slip and have jumped Busby's claim, and he is very much exercised about it."

"I should think he might be," Hartford observed.

"Yes," repeated Barrington, "he is much exercised and quite unreasonable about it. He came into my office a few moments ago and demanded an explanation. Of course I couldn't tell him anything except that it was just a mistake such as any man might make, and he said I was lying to him. He said I was too smart to make a fool break like that and that I was in with the gang that were trying to do him out of a claim that would have made him rich. I argued with him the best I could, but it didn't budge him. He said he didn't see that it made much difference, anyhow, whether I was a fool or a knave, because either way I hadn't any right to live, and he wound up by saying that he'd just go down to the Jolly Dog and get a few drinks to put him in the right frame of mind and then he'd come back and reduce the membership of the Gilt Gulch bar by one."

It is significant of Hartford's broad and tolerant temperament that he did not remind Barrington that he had previously predicted such a catastrophe as had now befallen. Nevertheless a slight glimmer of amusement stole across his face.

"So you want my advice, do you?" he asked.

"I should appreciate it very much," said Barrington.

"Well, you shall have it," said Hartford ironically, rapping the bowl of his pipe against the heel of his shoe. "If Jim Busby were out gunning for me and I couldn't shoot any better than you can, and I had a comfortable little sum saved, as you have, and there were a pretty girl in New England who didn't know any better than to love me, as she does you, I'd forfeit on the half past 2 train, and I wouldn't hurry back."

"But the trouble is," Barrington explained, "Susie—Miss Cutler, that is—will be here on the train that gets in at 2:50. The trains pass on the first siding out, you know. The fact is we are to be married day after tomorrow at noon. You'll pardon my omitting to send you an invitation, won't you? It was quite unintentional. I've been so busy."

"Oh," Hartford broke in, with a deprecatory wave of his arm, "you need not apologize. It's just one of those little mistakes a busy man is bound to make every now and then. I haven't Busby's disposition. I'll forgive you."

Then Hartford looked at his watch and found that it was twenty minutes past 2.

"You'll have to move lively, my boy," he said. "Keep an eye open for Jim, and if the coast is clear take the 2:50. If it isn't, walk over to Sand City and take the next one there."

"But about Susie," Barrington remonstrated.

"Pshaw!" growled Hartford. "That's easy enough. Leave a note for her with the station master, telling her to go back to Colorado Springs and you'll meet her there. If you don't have time to write a note, have the station master tell her you've been called away on a life and death matter and that she's to go to the hotel and wait until you send her word. Don't you worry about the girl; she'd prefer a slightly delayed wedding to an expedited funeral. Hurry up now. You've just about time to make it."

As he slipped down the main street of Gilt Gulch on his way to the station Barrington caught a glimpse of Jim Busby's gaunt profile as he stood at the bar of the Jolly Dog, his back toward the entrance. Barrington's indolent heart rejoiced as he reflected that the ten mile walk to Sand City would now be unnecessary. It was just twenty-eight minutes past 2 when he reached the station. He gave the necessary instructions concerning Susie to the station master and rushed out upon the platform. But the train which made up at Gilt Gulch was not yet ready to depart. A freight car had left the rails, blocking the track. Five ten, fifteen minutes passed, and still the obstruction remained. Barrington grew uneasy. Jim Busby might at any moment deem that he had imbibed a quantity of liquor commensurate with his contemplated task and begin to search for him. But at the end of twenty minutes, to his great relief, the perspiring train crew succeeded in replacing the derailed car, and the freight train pulled slowly out upon a siding. Even as it did so Barrington caught sight of the 2:50 train as it rounded the curve just beyond the station.

A moment later Susie Cutler, her trim little figure set off by a skillfully tailored gray traveling suit and her face wearing the look of determination befitting a girl who had just completed a journey nearly across the continent alone, descended to the platform of Gilt Gulch station. Barrington rushed toward her joyfully. Within three steps of her he encountered an obstacle—a very serious obstacle. This was nothing less than the muzzle of a revolver. Behind the revolver stood Mr. James Busby.

"Now, young man," said Mr. Busby, "we'll attend to your little matter, and we won't be long doing it."

Then Busby became suddenly conscious of a voice, evidently feminine, proceeding from some point in his rear and of the light pressure of a hand upon his arm.

"Do you know," said the voice, "it's dreadfully careless of you pointing that thing at anybody so. Why, it might go off."

Turning about, Busby looked into the piquant features of Susie Cutler. He decided unhesitatingly that, notwithstanding some freckles and the tendency of the nose to turn up, it was a rather pleasing face to view.

"So it might," said Busby slowly. "So it might."

"Well, then, stop aiming it at Har—Mr. Barrington," she commanded. "You make me nervous."

"Fact is," said Busby, "I was sort of planning to shoot Mr. Barrington."

He had lowered his weapon and spoke very calmly and deliberately.

"What!" shrieked the girl. "You have the audacity to stand there and tell me you mean to commit a cool blooded murder? Where are the police? A splendid place this must be to live in, where a man goes out to kill another as coolly as he'd eat his breakfast!"

"That's the way with all you folks from out Boston way," grumbled Busby. "You're always getting murder and the administration of justice mixed. I ain't going to murder him. I'm going to execute him. He's done me dirt, and if he ain't killed he'll do somebody else dirt. So for the good of everybody he'd ought to be shot. What do you care an way? Ain't no relative of yourn, is he?"

"Why, no," she answered in some confusion, "he isn't a relative exactly—that is, he"—

A gleam of comprehension shone in Busby's eyes.

"Come to think of it," said he, "I heard something about his being going to get married. Be you the girl?"

She nodded.

"Yes," she answered simply, "I'm the girl."

"Then," said Busby, "it's clear enough to my mind that in interfering with this execution you're preventing me from doing you a great favor. Howsomever, if you stick to it that you don't want him shot and if you'll take him out of Nevada and keep him out"—

The girl did not wait for him to finish. She transferred her grasp from Busby's arm to that of Barrington, who during the preceding conversation had stood silent, his face white, his limbs trembling, cold sweat beading his forehead.

"Come, Harry," she said imperiously.

Meekly, with bowed head and downcast eyes, Barrington suffered her to lead him aboard the train, which was now, the track being clear, about to move eastward.

Jim Busby sat down upon the edge of the platform and burst into a roar of laughter. Long after the train had disappeared around the curve below the station the station master found him there, his broad shoulders still shaking with merriment.

"Well, you doddering idiot," said the station master, "what's the joke?"

"Oh, ain't he going to get his all right, though?" queried the mirthful Busby. "Did you hear her 'Come, Harry,' him and snake him aboard the train like he'd been a puppy hitched to a string? He got out of being executed, but he's getting a life sentence, and that's a whole lot worse."

Senatorial Repartee.

Once in the senate chamber John J. Ingalls was directing some remarks to Senator Hoar of Massachusetts. The other senator from that state, Mr. Dawes, having come in while Mr. Ingalls was speaking, thought the words were meant for his ear, and so, interrupting, he asked Ingalls if he was directing the remarks at him. The Kansas senator turned slowly around, for Mr. Dawes sat behind him, and then, with delicious intonation, but an instant wit, he said, "I was directing my remarks to the successor of Charles Sumner and not to the successor of Daniel Webster."

The repartee has become traditional, and the utterance was at once placed alongside of that reply of Conkling to Senator Thurman, which is also traditional in the senate chamber.

Conkling was speaking, and Thurman had said, interrupting him, "Does the senator aim his remarks at me; he constantly turns to me?" when Mr. Conkling, with delicious gravity, bowing to Thurman, with whom he was very friendly, said: "When I turn to the senator I turn as the Mussulman turns to Mecca; I turn as I would turn to the common law of England—the world's most copious fount of jurisprudence."